

## **Eau Claire Transit**

### **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

#### **Fixed-Route System**

Eau Claire Transit (ECT) offers 11 regular routes and three express bus routes that serve the entire City of Eau Claire and portions of Altoona. Bus service is available within a four-block radius of most of the city limits. Routes have been carefully designed to serve medical facilities, retail areas and congregate housing. In addition, ECT serves neighborhoods as much as possible, particularly neighborhoods that have a high concentration of elderly and/or disabled residents.

All 22 buses in the Eau Claire Transit fleet are accessible. They are low-floored, meaning there are no steps to negotiate. In fact, the buses are able to “kneel” close to the ground so that they are level with the curb. All buses have a wheelchair ramp that may be deployed. Even if an individual is not using a mobility device, the ramp will be deployed upon request. Each bus can accommodate two wheelchairs and/or scooters.

Buses operate 6:00 am – 10:00 pm, Monday through Friday. In Altoona, bus service ends at 6:00 pm. On Saturday, the buses operate 8:00 am – 6:00 pm. Cost of each ride is \$1.50, and it includes one transfer. However, persons who are 65 or older, or have a disability, may apply for Reduced Fare Permit Card. This card qualifies its holders for a \$.75 fare. Applications for the Reduced Fare Permit Card may be obtained by calling Eau Claire Transit at 715-839-5111. Instead of a permit card, eligible persons may show proof of age OR a Medicare card.

#### **Paratransit System**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 mandated that fixed-route transit systems that operate with federal funds must provide a **comparable** demand-response transportation service for those individuals who cannot access and/or navigate the regular route system.

From 1994 – 2001, ECT contracted for paratransit services with Eau Claire Special Transportation. Abby Vans, Inc. was the contractor from 2002 to March 2007. Tendercare Transport, Inc. was awarded the contract from April of 2007 to March of 2012. Abby Vans, Inc. was again awarded the contract in April of 2012 and is the current provider of ECT's paratransit services.

An application process is necessary in order to determine if individuals qualify for paratransit services. The sole determining factor is whether or not an individual has the ability to use the city bus lines. Just because a person is not familiar with the bus routes does not qualify them for paratransit. Likewise, simply being disabled does not necessarily qualify an individual for paratransit. Many disabled people ride the city buses every day. Each bus in the transit fleet is accessible.

**It is important when completing a paratransit application that it is made clear how an individual's disability or health condition prevents them from accessing or navigating the fixed-route system.**

In addition, applications must be completed thoroughly. Common areas skipped on the application are emergency contact information, medical professional information and details about mobility devices. Incomplete applications may be returned to the sender, thus delaying the application process.

The application is faxed or mailed to the ECT office, and it is forwarded to Western Dairyland where the Paratransit Certifier will determine if the individual qualifies for paratransit. In most cases, he will schedule an appointment to meet with the applicant so he can perform a functional assessment. If a client is accepted into the program, they receive a detailed letter explaining the rules of the program and how to contact Tender Care. This process may and usually does take three weeks.

If a client is denied paratransit services, they are provided with transportation alternatives and given instructions on how to appeal the denial. ECT has a Paratransit Appeals Board in place to review all denied applications. This Board has the power to authorize transportation to denied applicants. (Denied applicants who appeal are served by paratransit until the Appeals Board makes a decision.)

In a very unique and beneficial partnership, the City of Eau Claire and Eau Claire County have a combined transportation program to provide paratransit services to the elderly and disabled in all of Eau Claire County. Eligibility criteria are different for those who live outside Eau Claire and Altoona city limits.

To qualify for paratransit when living outside the Cities of Eau Claire and Altoona, applicants must be 60 years or older OR have a qualifying disability and no other means of transportation. Eau Claire Transit coordinates the program for the entire county; applications should be sent to ECT.

Rides may be scheduled with Abby Vans by calling toll-free at 1-800-236-8438 between the hours of 5:00 am – 10:00 pm. Rides must be scheduled one day in advance; trips must be cancelled at least one hour before the scheduled pick-up time or the client will receive a no-show.

Paratransit service is **door-to-door**; drivers only assist passengers from the door of the pick-up point into the van, and vice versa. Driveways and sidewalks must be clear of snow and ice in the winter. Drivers may only carry two bags of groceries or other items for each passenger, up to 20 lb. each. Persons who require a medical transportation, such as a transport in a reclining position or who need to be escorted into and out of buildings are not eligible for paratransit.

The Paratransit program operates when the city buses run, as mandated by the ADA. Paratransit service is available from 6:00 am – 10:00 pm, Monday through Friday in the City of Eau Claire. Service ends at 6:00 pm in Altoona and anywhere else outside Eau Claire city limits. On Saturdays, the service operates from 8:00 am – 6:00 pm in the entire County. Paratransit is not available on the six major holidays: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas. There is no Sunday service.

Cost for paratransit service is \$3.00 per one-way ride. The City of Eau Claire and Eau Claire County subsidize the rest of the cost of the trip. The real cost of the trip is \$17.90. Abby Vans, Inc. is willing to set up an account for clients by which they are billed on a monthly basis for their rides.